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ABSTRACT

This issue of the "VCCA Journal" contains the following articles: (1) "Dear Andrei--Dear Patricia: International Education in English Composition I," by Robert Kilmer; (2) "The Cultivation of Critical Thinking: Some Tools and Techniques," by Russell Crescimanno; (3) "Assessment Partnership: A Model for Two-Year and Four-Year College Collaboration in Student Outcomes Assessment," by David Hanson and Steve Culver; (4) "It's OK for Students To Be Hot," by Christy Simpkins, Joyce Taylor, and Bonnie Wynn; (5) "Organizing Classified Employees To Promote Themselves and Their College," by Tamyra Kennedy; (6) "A Report on Project International Emphasis: Internationalizing Our Campus," by Celeste S. Makrevis; (7) "Longitudinal Analysis of Student Progress: The Status among Virginia's Community Colleges," by Charles Sieracki; (8) "Virginians for Virginia: The Partnership between SwVCC (Southwest Virginia Community College) and the Virginia Army National Guard for Economic Development," by Charles R. King and Pat Bussard; (9) "Teaching Methods That Impact on Student Retention," by Eric Hibbison, Gayle Childers, Susan Wood, and Barbara Glenn; (10) "An American Visits the European Community," by Sallie D. Branscom; and (11) "Harrington's Corner: Beefing Up the Funding Effort," by Dick Harrington. Three poems are also included in this issue. (JMC)

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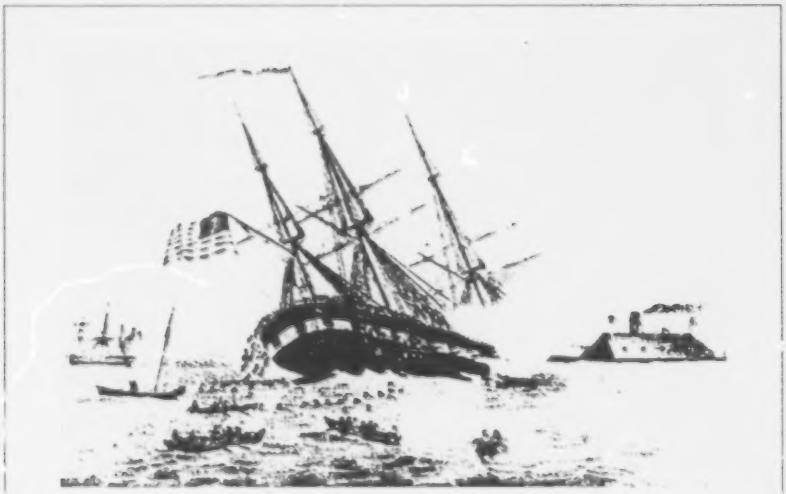

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Journal of the Virginia Community Colleges Association

Volume 6, Number 1 Winter 1991

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Scholarship: The Community College's Achilles' Heel

By George B. Vaughan

Director of the Center for Community College Education at George Mason University

While it is expected—indeed, demanded—that faculty in four-year colleges and universities spend a considerable portion of their time engaged in scholarly activities, too often at community colleges such activities are actually discouraged. The result is unfortunate. Faculty at senior institutions treat their colleagues at community colleges with scant respect, and the public, often without knowing why, views community colleges as extensions of high school, not as colleges. Scholarship is the Achilles' heel of the American community college.

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VCCA Journal

From the Editors 4

"Dear Andrei" "Dear Patricia";
International Education in English Composition I
An exchange of letters with Soviet citizens brings an awareness of "audience" and cultural differences to English Composition I.
by Robert Kilmer 6

The Cultivation of Critical Thinking:
Some Tools and Techniques
Techniques to encourage students to move beneath the surface in introductory sociology classes are described.
by Russell Crescimanno 12

Assessment Partnership: A Model for Two-Year and Four-Year College Collaboration in Student Outcomes Assessment
An exchange of student outcomes information between Virginia Western Community College and Radford University suggests that old assumptions may need updating and leads to further collaboration.
by David Hanson and Steve Culver 18

It's OK for Students To Be Hot
New River Community College's tutoring program for minority students at area high schools has resulted in improved grades and a renewed interest in education.
by Christy Simpkins, Joyce Taylor, and Bonnie Wynn 20

Organizing Classified Employees to Promote Themselves and Their College
The organization and activities of Mountain Empire Community College's successful Association of Classified Employees are described.
by Tamyra Kennedy 24

Continued

A Report on Project International Emphasis: Internationalizing Our Campus
Participation in Project International Emphasis has led to a number of changes at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College.
by Celeste S. Makrevis 30

Longitudinal Analysis of Student Progress: The Status Among Virginia's Community Colleges
The results of a survey of student tracking interests and methods at Virginia Community Colleges are presented.
by Charles Sieracki 34

Virginians for Virginia: The Partnership between SwVCC and the Virginia Army National Guard for Economic Development
Annual training exercises involving over 700 Guardsmen skilled in engineering brought improvements to the Southwest Virginia Community College campus and to surrounding counties.
by Charles R. King and Pat Bu sard 39

Teaching Methods That Impact on Student Retention
"Reading" math, doubling, yarn sorts, and dialogic journals are presented as means to improve students' learning.
by Eric Hibbison, Gayle Childers, Susan Wood,and Barbara Glenn 42

An American Visits the European Community
A review of accounting education and practices in England, France, and Germany and observations on European life styles are presented.
by Sallie D. Branscom 50

Poetry

Teaching Brian Hansen 5
A Poem Martha Kearns 23
Recycling Brian Hansen 33
Call for Poetry 4

Harrington's Corner
by Dick Harrington
54

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From the Editors

Virginia's economic problems have touched just about every institution and person in the Commonwealth, and the Virginia Community Colleges Association has not been an exception. Because of funding shortages and uncertainties, the spring/summer issue of the *VCCA Journal* was cancelled. Funding has been restored, and the editors, not wishing to abandon the many fine papers that had been accepted for that issue, decided to publish them in the current edition. We would like to thank our writers and readers for their patience, and we are pleased to take up, once again, the task of helping to communicate the work of leaders and innovators at Virginia's community colleges.

Call for Poetry

For the Next Issue
of the *VCCA Journal*

If an IBM compatible computer is used to prepare the poem, we would appreciate the loan of a disk with the text. Please note the word processing program used.

Deadline for all submissions:
1 March 1992

Submit poetry to:
Poetry & Arts Editor
VCCA Journal
Blue Ridge Community College
Box 80
Weyers Cave, VA 24486

Teaching

Brian Hansen

Like the thin blue meeting
of sea and sky, tasks
blur when I recall my twenty
years as sailor and mate:
sails furled and unfurled
boats sanded and painted
ropes scraped and tarred.

Not doing or commanding,
but teaching every crew
still sings to me like wind in the rigging.
Some faces shine like planets:
the man with many stories
the hopeful one
the lost soul.

Witnessing these pilgrims learn
to read the wind
to steer always for Port Mystery
to know but not engage the white whale
brought me joy
ineffable as sunlight
reflecting from the sea.

Northern Virginia Community College

"Dear Andrei"—"Dear Patricia"; International Education in English Composition I

by Robert Kilmer

When Project International Emphasis invited me to "internationalize" one of my courses, I saw the need and the difficulty with equal clarity. I could see that global awareness is a survival skill. Just in the last two years the world has changed so fast our perceptions can barely keep up. On the other hand, I never have time in a semester to do all I need to do, let alone what would be nice to do. In May, I feel like a nesting bird as the young leave: "Stay off the ground! Watch out for cats! Good-bye!"

Could anything be done with English Composition I, home of dozens of required skills and projects, all essential for survival in college and beyond, and with no room for any modish fripperies? My wife, source of most of my best ideas, pointed out an article by Mary McGrory in *Washington Post* ("Outpourings from the U.S.S.R.," 9 Jan., 1990, p. A2, col. 5). The article told of Peace Links, a women's peace-promoting organization that helps Americans and Soviets become pen pals. Peace Links can supply letters from Soviet citizens. Two months later, my students were excitedly bringing to class their first answers from Moscow and other Soviet cities, reading them aloud to the class and showing off postcards and photographs. I had not only internationalized my course but had also strengthened it without adding any material to "cover."

One of my most difficult tasks in freshman composition is to help my students develop a sense of audience. Every year I slog into the battle of convincing them to think of writing not as something they turn in for a grade, but as communication: something that achieves a purpose, talks to specific readers. But many of my students' attitudes have been ingrained for so many years that no amount of role playing, no podium hectoring, seems to give them a new vision.

Writing a letter to a Soviet citizen changed their vision of the possibilities of writing. In this assignment many of my students participated for the first time in writing that was real beyond the classroom.

With the packet of letters from Peace Links in hand, I began to cultivate a sense of audience in my classes by showing them a transparency of the letter I planned to answer.

Natasha:

> Dear friends. I am eager to have a pen-friend in the USA. I am a teacher of English at a secondary school in Lyubertsy, a town not far from Moscow. I want to know as much as possible about the countries, the language of which I teach at school. I need it for myself and for my pupils.
>
> .... My name is Natasha. I am 47. All the members of my family like travelling, museums, theatrics, art exhibitions. My daughters and I like singing and dancing. My husband is fond of hunting, volley-ball, tennis and car driving. ... And, of course everybody likes to read. We have a good library at home. With great respect, Natasha ...

Then we did a five-minute free-write on ideas for my response to Natasha's letter and began our discussion. What clues to personality and interest could we find? What would be the strong features of a letter to this person? What mistakes should be avoided? We developed ideas for me to include in my letter, as well as grading criteria for theirs.

We consulted a map of the Soviet Union, found Natasha's town, and calculated the miles and kilometers to Moscow. I added three criteria to the assignment: they would consult at least one written source, and include in their letters the information gained; they would use at least one phrase in Russian; and they would gracefully and silently illustrate one idiom that their pen friend didn't understand. Even my weaker students can feel like language mentors in this assignment. They widen their eyes at "All folks, and much love, Olga." And they smile when Alexei writes, "P.S. Forgive, please, if I've made any mistakes. I'll avoid it soon."

Usually, when I announce assignments, the groans and windy sighs that seem to be a high school ritual my freshmen bring to college can make me feel like management in a labor dispute. One of the most exciting episodes of this assignment was the swap session at the end of the first day. I walked around our discussion circle, passing out letters at random, and then assisted in a flurry of swaps. "I've got a basketball player"; "Here's a Depeche Mode freak"; "Here's a computer enthusiast." They were hooked immediately: comparing letters, puzzling over handwriting and idiom, noticing that in the Soviet Union addresses are written "backward," and already thinking about their answers.

As we discussed the letters my students would be answering, they further developed their sense of audience. We marvelled at the writers' skill in English, and at our single-language limitations. We talked about the Soviets' bravery in writing a letter into the void, for anyone to look at or critique – and about the motivation this showed. Tatyana wrote to Betty Bumpers, founder of Peace Links:

> At the first, let me thank you for your noblest cause – you make friendship between people, you kill the man's fear, when one thinks of another sistem and political views. Bravo & hurrah to all of you!

Yuri:

About myself. I'm 27 years; worker, electrician man, work at plant shop, living in a small town on the North Urals. ..... Im ordinary man. We are simply people. Both american and russian. We as well you smile, cry, to the work, to the cinema, to the guest. Let's become some kind, more tolerant, better. We are people of Earth. Good-bye.

The next day I brought the rough draft of my own answer, mostly to show them that I do indeed draft and revise—some are still convinced that "real writers" write polished drafts on the first try. They didn't want to discuss *my* draft; they wanted to share and to work on their own. In small groups students read their drafts aloud and discussed revision.

I was pleased by how quickly my students began to think of their writing as something that would have an effect on a reader. They began to practice cultivating their audiences. In the letters they were to answer they saw clues that told them what to write about. They were learning to create a dialogue, learning what goes into one. They saw that they could use questions to provoke a response as well as to satisfy their real curiosity. They considered the reader's feelings and motivation; they wondered about cultural and political differences and about whether their questions might hurt or offend. They could see that if they offended their pen friend, they wouldn't get an answer. When they wondered, "Am I saying it right?" they were seeing that their language has consequences in a way that they don't see the consequences of an awkward phrase in a more academic paper.

When I suggested that they include what they know or think about their friend's country, my students began to wonder about their conceptions of the Soviet Union. They turned to their pen friends for answers.

Angela:

When you write me back could you tell me a little more about what you do and where you live? I have no idea what Leningrad is like. I picture in my mind a cold and gray place and that's it. Is that true?

Wondering what their Soviet counterparts were like, my students began to gain perspective on their own views.

Tony:

In our Country there is a big controversy about Abortion. That is one of the biggest issues I feel that is concerning the United States. I feel that Abortion is the same as Murder, but I'm afraid that my opinion is not to common anymore. What do you think of these things? Are they similar issues in your country?

Gillian:

I wish to know about your lifestyle, too. I have never been to another country, and I have lived in only two houses thirty miles from each other (approximately 44 kilometers);

therefore, I do not know much about different life-styles.

My students were so intent on making contact with Soviet citizens that when my requirements clashed with their efforts to communicate, they *resisted*. I require my freshmen to make major revisions in first drafts, to do more than edit. It's another challenge to the writing habits most of them bring, and they often balk. This time, however, they had a better argument than "I don't see why I have to revise it if I like it the way it is." They said that a personal letter should be relaxed and casual, that too much revision would make their tone formal, their organization stilted. These arguments gave me pause. Certainly they had a point or two. I was delighted to stumble into these discussions, this rebellion. Now I could point out that revision can be for any purpose, in any direction the writer wants. Informality? Casual tone? Fine. Work for it. Create it, strengthen it. More important, I was delighted with these rebellions because my students were defending themselves as communicators, as people who had something to say, something to accomplish. They resented the professor's intrusions.

One of my school's goals for this course is for students to begin to do research. My requirement that they include research and Russian in their letters addressed this goal. "I don't know anyone who speaks Russian." "Well, how would you find out how to learn some?"

Andrea:

I tried to look up Tolgiatti on the map. I followed the Volga to the city of Kuybyshev. Near it was a city named Tolyatti. Is this your city's English spelling? I'd like to learn more about your city. Is it a large city?

Tracy:

Dear Vlad, Hey! How are you doing? MeH 30BYT [my name is] Tracy ... and I'm almost 18 years old. ... I don't speak Russian. I hope the little bit of Russian that I wrote was readable to you.

Ten days from the beginning of the project we brought to class our final copies and addressed envelopes. Postage for two 8x11 sheets is 45 cents and I had plenty of stamps, and nickels to make change. I collected the letters and mailed them that day.

In grading photocopies of their letters I looked for the characteristics we had agreed on. Did the letter invite a friendly response; reveal interest in the other's life and personality; show awareness of language and acceptance of cultural diversity; respond to the original letter? Had the student participated in discussing, drafting, conferring, revising and mailing? As the excerpts above show, I did not grade on writing mechanics since we work on content and revision in the first six weeks of the semester before concerning ourselves with mechanics.

While we waited for our answers, I asked them to write journal entries about the assignment. I had been

nervous about how much "evil-empire" vision might exist. From looks and a comment or two I knew there was some, but decided to be discreet instead of valorous. I braced myself for the objections that hadn't surfaced in class but that I was afraid some students might be harboring.

To my delight, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

Lisa:

> At first I wasn't too excited about this assignment. I don't know why. I wasn't in the mood then. It's easier for me to write impersonal papers.
>
> As I started working on it, it became interesting.
>
> I liked the idea of knowing someone so far away. .... I liked playing with the Cyrillic alphabet. Donnie taught it to me once, but I had forgotten. Made me want to study Russian.

Tony:

> This was a fun paper to write. It wasn't like I was writing it because I had to. I actually wanted to write. I have never talked with anyone overseas before, so I'm looking forward to hearing from him. It will be nice to find out what it is really like over there. I just hope he writes back. I plan to write him again, if he does write me. I have already started to think of things to write.

Some students objected to the criteria I had imposed for revision, research, and exercises in language, but not a large number. The arguments about revision, I knew, would continue to the end of the semester.

I found far less Slavophobia than I had expected, but some. Two students worried about endangering security clearances, one for a future job, another because of a relative's job. I let them decide whether to mail their letters, and one decided not to. But he seemed regretful and impatient with the vague governmental pressure he felt. For students like this one, and also to broaden our scope, I'd like to get letters from Africa and South America as well as from USSR next year.

We mailed our letters at the end of September and now in November we are impatient for answers. The exchange takes six weeks, and most of my students are nervously asking, "Should I write again and see what's happened?"

The early responses are greeted with proud, shy smiles. "I got a letter from Ivana, Dr. Kilmer." The students cheer and applaud each answer as if it were a trophy and listen enviously as letters are read aloud. They hear personal contacts, the beginning of friendships.

Olga:

> It'd be much appreciated if you helped me to learn some of modern American English. Just the way you yourself and your friends speak, not the way papers do, as it's rather boring in my opinion. ....
>
> Do you have a boy-friend? Don't take offence, I'm really good at asking questions and besides I think

it's good sometime to share thoughts and feeling with someone.

Andrei:

As for the Ukraine you're quite right – only few people speaking Russian the most of us speak Ukrainian. But I should say that present days there's a growing tendency to speak only Ukrainian. It connected with events which take place here now. What concerns decorations on women skirts & blouses there are a lot of them in our shops but to my great sorrow I can't sent you them because they prohibited for sending in other countries.

.... Patricia, could you explain what it means "a day care center". It has connection with cars, hasn't it?

I had first thought that "internationalizing the curriculum" would mean that I would be spending more time lecturing, conveying information, facing glazed stares and trying to convince doubting students of the global nature of their lives. I was afraid I'd have to become an "international expert." Instead, I'm learning that international education can be surprisingly effective and interesting; students can be involved in an active way, participants in an international conversation rather than only passive receivers of information. Thus, "Dear Andrei" – "Dear Patricia" reinforces skills I teach already instead of adding burdensome content. Students practice writing to an audience; they write for a purpose attainable only by writing; they increase their international awareness; and they increase their awareness of their own culture.

Sources of pen friends:

- **Association of Pen Friends Clubs of Japan**
  Hongo, P. O. Box 100
  Tokyo, Japan 113-91
- *Directory of Pen Friend Organizations*
  International Pen Friend Service
  I-10015 Ivrea, Italy
  Lists 500 pen pal organizations world wide, including ones for adults. Published each spring. Free.
- **Peace Links**
  attn: Ms. Linda Talbot
  747 8th Street, NE
  Washington, D.C. 20003
  Telephone: [202] 544-0805
  Primarily a women's peace organization, Peace Links offers letters to both genders. Depending on supply, they will send up to 25 letters to a teacher. They may fill some requests over the telephone. You might want to ask for a few letters for "older" students and one for yourself.

Robert Kilmer is a professor of English at the Woodbridge Campus of Northern Virginia Community College in Woodbridge where he has taught since 1976. He teaches world literature, mythology, creative writing, and freshman composition. He has been a supporter of the campus honors program and was one of the Woodbridge representatives to Project International Emphasis.

The Cultivation of Critical Thinking: Some Tools and Techniques

by Russell Crescimanno

At this point in time I have been teaching sociology and related courses for twenty-two years. The most frustrating aspect of this work has been the tendency of students to stay on the surface of the material, to deal with it superficially. There are any number of analytically valid explanations for this. None of them, however, lessen the frustration and resulting stress for the instructor encouraging students to step further into the depth of the material being studied.

While people generally seem to know that life and learning become richer and more meaningful when one moves beneath the surface appearance of things, as teachers and academicians we live and work within bureaucratized social systems that, perhaps unwittingly, encourage fragmentation and superficiality. In his book, *The Human Cycle*, Colin Turnbull (1989) says:

> Much of what is taught at University, and the manner of teaching, amounts to little more than technical training and thus, however necessarily, curtails full intellectual development. That is the price we have to pay for the specialization that characterizes our society, in which even the art of reason comes to be considered a specialized skill, appropriate and useful to some and not for others. (p. 130)

So, how do we invite our students into the depth of the material we teach? How can we facilitate the process of transforming data into information, and information into knowledge? And, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, how do we help students realize that knowledge can deepen into understanding which can, in time, ripen into wisdom? In short, how can we cultivate critical thinking in the classroom?

Framing the Course in a Larger Context

On the first day of class, I tell my students that I'm aware they think, and their transcripts will reflect, that they have registered for a course called introductory sociology. However, the truth is, I tell them, that we will be involved in a year-long effort to literally come to terms with one huge question. That question is, "What does it mean to be human?"

As you might imagine, those who immediately grasp the scope of the question look at me as though I'm

crazy. Those who don't, simply look dumbfounded. It doesn't matter to me because now I know the value of framing the course in a larger context. It immediately forces them to reflect on and to think more critically about the material we are studying in terms of its bearing on this larger, and yet more focused, question. Essentially, then, it asks the student-as-human not to take human being-ness for granted but to consider it, instead, in light of the material at hand. This interruption of the taken-for-granted-world of the student is at the heart of the critical thinking process.

Class Participation

I also tell them on the first day that class participation will be an integral component of their grade for the course. Immediately, there are some spontaneous moans and groans from the naturally more vocal people in the room, and some very pained expressions from those too intimidated to utter a sound. None of this "gets to me" as it once did because I am now so convinced of the value of having them learn to speak their minds.

Some time ago, it occurred to me that we spend a considerable amount of time helping people to improve their reading and writing skills as students, but we do little or nothing to help them learn to talk more effectively. This has always seemed both curious and misguided to me since talking is clearly one of our primary means of communicating with one another. To my mind, it is essential that they learn how to say what they know, as well as what they are uncertain about, with some measure of clarity.

I assure them that they are not being asked to become suddenly eloquent or at ease talking in class. Rather, they are being asked to identify and take their own particular next step of involvement with regard to participating in class discussions. Those who habitually never say anything are encouraged to begin by framing their understanding of the course material, on a day-by-week basis, into what we call an "I'm learning" statement which can then be simply read/shared in class. Those who routinely talk readily are reminded that their next step, at times, may be to listen, to actively create space for others. This principle of "taking your own next step" as a guideline for class participation seems to ease some of the anxiety about speaking in class.

Beyond this, I ask them to trust that as their nervousness subsides, they will increasingly come to hear themselves speaking as others do. Consequently, they will be better able to respond, in the moment, to the quality and coherence of their own articulated thought patterns. This self-reflection is an essential component of the critical thinking process.

Depth Dimension Questions

Following this explanation regarding the role of class participation, I introduce my students to three questions which, I tell them, will guide and challenge our work throughout the year. The questions are, "What?" "So What?" and "So Now What?" I explain that I will use these questions to coax

them into thinking more deeply about the material we are studying. I encourage them to challenge me and one another with them as well.

The question "What?" is content-based. It asks, "what is the point of this lecture, this discussion, this chapter, or this film?" In this way, the students quickly realize that the material they are being asked to work with does have a point, an intended purpose, and that they will be expected to have an informed opinion as to what that is. Cumulatively, over the course of the semester, this question serves to keep them in touch with the focus of the class.

The question "So what?" asks them to consider the significance or the consequences of the course content. In other words, once they are able to say what the material is about, this question encourages them to find out why they are being asked to study it in the first place. It doesn't take them long to catch on to this form of kind-spirited challenging. They are increasingly quick to ask me, as well as one another, "So what's the point here?" and then, "Well, so what anyway?" It becomes difficult for them, and me, not to think critically about what is being said or thought in the midst of these powerful little questions that immediately reveal superficial responses and pat answers.

The third question"So now what?"invites them to consider the application of what they have learned to a course of action. For example, an exam question asks, "Given what you have learned about the homeless, what policies or programs would you implement if you had the power to initiate such change?" In this way, they are asked to reflect on and to become more critically aware of their hypothetical and actual choices.

Journaling

As we close out the first class session, I tell them that they will be keeping a journal as part of the requirements for the course. I then ask them to bring a three-ring notebook and four section dividers to our next class meeting. The Journal is a primary teaching tool in the process of cultivating the depth dimension associated with critical thinking.

Coming to terms with a question like "What does it mean to be human?" requires that the student develop a basic understanding of the interdependent intricacies at the heart of the relationship between the individual and society. Developing this understanding is no simple task. It grows, like a plant or a person, in response to its being cultivated and nurtured.

The four sections of the journal are designed to assist the process of transforming information into understanding. These four journal sections are called *Class Notes*, *I'm Learning*, *Realizations*, and *Encounters*.

Class Notes

This section of the journal they are familiar with, at least in name. I realize, I tell them, that they have been taking notes in their classes for some time. I also realize, however, that they probably take notes in sentence fragment form like ninety-five percent of my students. It has been my experience that, on the whole, sentence fragments both reflect

and contribute to fragmented thinking. Consequently, I ask them to take notes in outline form so that a particular idea or concept is understood and recorded within a larger, more meaningful, context.

There is always considerable resistance to this because it requires that one think about the material contextually and therefore critically, and thinking critically is work. But we stay with it, struggle and all, because outlines push them to organize the day-by-day material in terms of a larger picture. And it is this larger picture, of being-human-in-society, that I want them to eventually "see" from within themselves. In addition, and as a significant side benefit, the *Class Notes* section of the journal is a convenient place to keep the course syllabus and other (holes punched) handouts that routinely get left at home or lost.

I'm Learning...

After years of working with the journal, I now tell my students in advance that this section turns out to be their key to success with the journal. Since this represents a third of their grade, it is also their key to doing well in the course generally. It is essentially an exercise, a calisthenic of the mind that they are asked to work with as often as they can.

They are to ask "What am I learning?" from this chapter, this lecture, this discussion, this filmthis information that makes up the course content. They are to ask and then answer in one sentence, "I'm learning" statements. I ask that they put no more than six or seven one sentence statements to a page, so that their learning has space to be displayed, so they can see at a glance their core learnings day-by-week throughout the semester.

If these statements are authentic, if they truly represent what is being learned, they can become the heart of class discussions or the living seed of an idea that later is worked up into an essay or *Realization*. Because of this, these concise, poignant statements are at the center of the learning process for the student, and for the course as a whole.

Realizations

Converting outlined notes into *I'm learning* statements is an effort to get to the heart of the matter, to the core of the learning that is evolving. *Realizations* represent an effort to express a fuller, richer awareness and a more developed understanding of the material at hand. Ideally, *Realizations* are the result of the student seeing the application and relevance of classroom material in light of the everyday world, especially their own. Ideally, they represent the integration of thought and feeling. I say "ideally" because most of my students, indeed most people, are out of balance in this regard. Their early *Realization* writes are typically full of facts or feelings, but rarely are the two expressed as one. And it is to this end, the complimentary expression of head and heart, that we read and write and work.

Encounters

The students are expected to develop the first three sections of the journal on their own. Frequently, of

course, I ask them to turn to one section or another, and we either work from or in it in the classroom. The *Encounters* section, however, is not something they are responsible for outside of class. This component of the journal is exclusively for exercises that I bring to the classroom.

It is called encounters because of the spirit of open engagement, inquiry, and intrigue that I'd especially like them to bring to the work we do in this part of the journal. Through a variety of techniques like drawing pictures, dialoguing with dominant and non-dominant hands, and creative visualization, the student has an opportunity to become more intimate with various aspects of the material we are studying.

One can encounter anything or anybody. For example, students can encounter their own socio-economic position when we are studying the significance of social stratification as a system of opportunities. They can also encounter their jobs as economic entities in their lives, or their families as "primary agents of socialization."

On other occasions, they are asked to choose an idea or concept from the course that has been especially meaningful to them, something that resonates with the possibility of significant personal learning. Then they dialogue with it in a writing exercise that uses both dominant and non-dominant hands and so draws more fully from left and right hemispheric modes of knowing.

When quiet background music is added to an exercise like this, there is a noticeable change in the atmosphere in the room as both thought and its expression deepen. In this way, we take some significant steps toward cultivating critical thinking in the classroom.

Conclusion

A critical need for reform at the core of our thinking about schools and education is becoming increasingly apparent. In his speech accepting the New York City Teacher of the Year Award, John Taylor Gatto (1990) shared these poignant observations:

> I've noticed a fascinating phenomenon in my 25 years of teaching – that schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the great enterprises of the planet. ...The truth is that schools don't really teach anything except how to obey orders.
>
> Schools are intended to produce through the application of formulae, formulaic human beings whose behavior can be predicted and controlled.
>
> Well-schooled people are irrelevant. They can sell film and razor blades, push paper and talk on the telephones, or sit mindlessly before a flickering computer terminal but as human beings they are useless. Useless to others and useless to themselves.

This is why it is so important for us to learn to weave critical thinking skills into the fabric of our courses and curriculums.

Gatto helps us see the difference between "schooling" and education. My students are generally "well-schooled," and they come to the classroom with a passive, passenger-like mentality, a slumber of sorts. It is only by participating, by becoming more critically involved with the material and with themselves as learners, that they are stirred from this sleep, that they are educated.

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Russell Crescimanno is a professor of sociology at Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville where he has taught for 17 years. His major area of academic interest lies in teaching and writing about the nature and structure of human consciousness and its relationship to significant learning in the classroom.

Assessment Partnership: A Model for Two-Year and Four-Year College Collaboration in Student Outcomes Assessment

by David Hanson and Steve Culver

In March of 1987 a task force led by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) produced a set of ten guidelines for student assessment programs in response to a mandate from the Virginia General Assembly. For community colleges, one of the most important requirements was "Guideline 8" instructing four-year institutions to provide progress reports to community colleges on transfer students.

In recent years, more Virginia Western Community College (VWCC) students have transferred to Radford University than to any other public four-year institution. For this reason, data on transfer students provided by Radford was especially important to the VWCC outcomes assessment program.

A complete academic record for each student was provided on a microcomputer diskette. As VWCC assessment staff began to analyze the data, an odd coincidence gave birth to an idea for a more reciprocal reporting relationship. It was noted that 44 VWCC transfer students enrolled at Radford in the fall of 1989. Nearly the exact same size group, 43 "reverse transfer" students, entered VWCC that same term, having previously attended Radford. So VWCC provided a DBase file on these students to Radford's assessment office. In both exchanges, the data included name and social security number, along with academic records, to enable the receiving institution to verify and analyze the information.

The data from Radford revealed some important results. VWCC transfer students in general did very well at Radford. They did not experience any drop in mean grade-point average (dispelling the "transfer shock" myth); 85% were in good standing, and associate degree completers were, on the average, more successful than non-completers.

The data reported by VWCC revealed that a third of the transfers from Radford who entered Fall '89 were curricular students (i.e., enrolled in a program of study); and Radford's assessment staff discovered that

reverse transfers attending VWCC generally left Radford in good academic standing, contrary to the common assumption that it is mostly unsuccessful students who "drop-out" of senior institutions to go to a community college.

By studying both general trends and individual student records, it was concluded that transfer patterns are much more complex than had been anticipated. Students move back and forth between institutions for a variety of reasons.

On the surface, it appears that the traditional path – high school followed immediately by two years at the community college, completed with a baccalaureate degree at a four-year institution a couple of years later – is more likely the exception rather than the rule. Further research is needed, but if this conclusion proves to be true, it could have profound implications for both VWCC and Radford.

The exchange of information about transfer students is the first of many collaborative efforts being planned to enhance the student outcomes assessment programs of VWCC and Radford. Both institutions have used the ETS Academic Profile to assess general education outcomes, and some longitudinal studies are being considered. Radford's alumni questionnaire may be revised to collect new information for community colleges. Finally, collaboration in the development of departmental assessment projects will be explored.

If the purpose of outcomes assessment is not only to provide answers but also to generate more questions about student performance and institutional effectiveness, then the partnership begun by VWCC and Radford University has already been mutually rewarding.

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David C. Hanson is Director of Instructional Support Services at Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke where he has served as assessment coordinator for the past four years. He is a frequent conference speaker and an independent consultant on college outcomes assessment.

It's OK for Students To Be Hot

by Christy Simpkins, Joyce Taylor, and Bonnie Wynn

Research has shown that early intervention is the most effective route for eliminating barriers which hinder students' academic success. During the past four years, New River Community College (NRCC) has witnessed the evolution of an intervention/retention program that has become a daily reminder of how successful a cooperative effort between college and community can be if the right components are in place.

Program History

The origins of this cooperative venture (now called the "HOT Program"—for High on Tutoring) can be traced to a concern expressed by an NRCC committee which was established to promote awareness of issues affecting minority populations. This committee especially felt the need to improve the goals and the academic achievement of black youth in the New River Valley. Their desire to see the emergence of a population of college-bound black students led to the college's application for funding from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia for a Community Alliance Recruitment and Retention Program. This program, which began in fall of 1986, centered around satellite tutorial sites within local communities. In addition to tutorial services for minority secondary-level students, program components included workshops and seminars for parents of the students, as well as a communication network linking the black population with high schools, the college, and social service agencies in the region.

During fall of 1988, again through funding from SCHEV, Radford University and New River Community College combined the tutorial program with Radford University's Minority Academic Incentive Program to form a united recruitment effort serving the minority student populations at Radford, Pulaski County, and Christiansburg high schools. This program, designed to encourage black high school students to develop commitment to and readiness for attending a college or university, included the tutorial program that NRCC had initiated in 1986.

As the two colleges' cooperative program evolved into a retention program for minority students on both campuses, New River Community College felt that the potential impact of the tutoring program upon the future retention of minority youth necessitated its continuation. Therefore, NRCC continued to sponsor the tutorial services as an in-kind contribution to the 1989-90 grant project's

budget and as a non-grant program in 1990-91. In addition, because of Pulaski County students' success in the program, county administrators agreed to provide a portion of the funding as a part of their dropout prevention efforts.

Program Description

Although the program is in its fourth year, its name is relatively new. "HOT" was selected in 1989 to affirm tutoring as a positive activity rather than a punishment.

The HOT Program currently operates as a part of NRCC's community service efforts through its Office of Continuing Education. An administrative assistant in the continuing education office directs the program with the help of a site coordinator and volunteer tutors at each of three sites—a church, a community center, and a vocational building owned by Pulaski County Schools. Region-wide events are held at the college. The approximately 100 students served by the program are primarily minority youth; however, others are encouraged to attend.

The major resource offered through the HOT program is the tutoring services, provided two nights each week by the site coordinator and volunteer tutors. These individuals work one-on-one with students who need help with general basic skills as well as with specific subjects.

Understandably, the role of the site coordinators has expanded beyond the original stated purpose. They have become mentors and role models. All the coordinators are black and have college degrees. In addition to these individuals, students are exposed to a variety of other potential mentors/models, including guest speakers and volunteers who assist with the one-on-one tutoring effort. During the past year, the president of a Virginia Tech fraternity who had heard about the program volunteered two hours of tutoring time for each of the 60 fraternity members. Program personnel have found that the older students in the program also tend to become influential models for the younger participants.

Another major resource offered through the program is the provision of a quiet place dedicated to studying and doing homework assignments. This environment is especially important for those students who do not have such a place at home. Many of the students, prior to their entering the HOT program, had typically not turned in homework assignments.

Through project funding, the sites have also made school supplies available to those students who might not otherwise have access to them. These supplies include the construction paper, tape, glue, magazines, etc., that are often needed for school projects. According to one site coordinator, even the need for a 59 cent poster board could pose a problem for some of the students.

Program Outcome

HOT Program personnel agree that the outcomes of the HOT Program have made the effort well worth the investment (last year the program operated on a $7,000 budget).

Evaluation forms completed by the site coordinators bear testimony to the success of the program. One student's grades went from C to B in English, D to C in math, C to B in health, and D to B in reading. Another's grades went from C's and D's to the A/B honor roll. All three coordinators enthusiastically share stories about students who have "turned around" academically as a result of the program. They share examples of seeing C and D students become honor roll students in one grade period.

Perhaps even more important, though, is the fact that site coordinators and volunteers are now seeing the students begin to set goals for their futures. One site coordinator observed that some of the students who had not even reached the "I want to be a fireman stage" now seem to understand how much control they have over their own futures; furthermore, they seem better able to understand the importance of starting early to attain a sound academic and cultural foundation. An especially important by-product of improved academic and personal skills has been greater self-esteem among the students. As one site coordinator noted, "Establishing self-esteem is all-important; ninety percent of the battle is how the kids feel about themselves."

The HOT Program has become a popular one with students; in four years, participation has grown from 40 to almost 100. Students involved in HOT frequently recruit their friends into the program, and they proudly wear their red T-shirts with large white letters which proclaim "I'm HOT." Site coordinators typically find students waiting for them when they arrive. In addition, camaraderie has developed among students because of many shared experiences—attending musical performances, going to the Roanoke Valley Science Museum, etc. And the older students volunteer to tutor those who are younger. As the Pulaski site coordinator explained, "The students became a team, and the program provided them an activity that was socially acceptable."

The HOT Program is proof that learning is inextricably tied to factors other than those that are academic. As soon as the project director, the site coordinators, and the students begin relating their experiences with the program, it is immediately apparent that a very important feature of the program is the caring environment that it has established. It is made clear to the students that they are encouraged to set high goals because someone does care about them. Certainly, the activities of the HOT Program have given new meaning to the concept of a "community" college.

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Joyce Taylor is the public information officer at New River Community College.

A Poem

Martha Kearns

"Is the bottom hard enough to walk on?"
I remember asking my brother before I tried
to cross the murky pond.
"Very hard," he said,
but after one tentative step
I could feel myself sinking.

A shout of laughter.
"You didn't ask how far the bottom was!"

I didn't ask how far the bottom was.
I never knew to ask.

Now, I have reached bottom.
But it's hard and firm
Hard enough.
Firm enough,
To push up from.

J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College

Organizing Classified Employees to Promote Themselves and Their College

by Tamyra Kennedy

When an administrator organizes a project or prepares for special meetings, who often does the actual work of making sure that everything runs smoothly and that every detail is taken care of? Usually the secretaries or other support staff members find that this lot falls to them. When a faculty member needs copies of materials, transcripts, or phone numbers, again support staff is there to assist the faculty member in order to serve students. The Support Staff of a college serves as "the wind beneath the wings" of the faculty and administration.

While classified staff members are there to assist faculty and administrators, their support extends to the whole college community. A member of the support staff is the first smiling face to greet potential students. The support staff work with nervous work-study students, encouraging them and listening to their problems. They listen patiently to complaints and steer students and the public to services available on their campuses.

With all of these responsibilities resting on their shoulders, support staff don't often feel they can take time for themselves, but they should. As Jack Scott, president of Pasadena City College, said in a recent issue of *The Community, Technical and Junior College Times*, "It is clear that a grouchy salesperson or a disgruntled employee does not enjoy his or her work."

How can support staff members keep from becoming like that disgruntled employee? Joining together with other members to promote themselves and their colleges is one of the most important ways. By developing themselves as a group, they can improve morale, provide an inner support structure for the college, promote and enhance staff professional development, and unify into one, strong voice.

As staff members promote themselves, they continue to serve students. A professional group of employees on a campus can set an example for student clubs to follow. It can provide an example of professionalism for the entire student body to use as a model of conduct. It can help provide funding for campus projects, such as student scholarships, campus beautification, or special events.

A Model for the State

One group that has successfully taken root on a college campus is the Association of Classified Employees at

Mountain Empire Community College, or ACE, as they are affectionately known to MECC students. ACE has grown tremendously in the 17 years since it began. Its members now sponsor a student scholarship each year, provide funding to buy meals for needy students and support the community, on and off campus, in other ways.

Still Growing after all these Years

First formed as a secretarial support group in 1973, the purpose of ACE was to promote educational and professional activities. The group united in order to have a recognizable voice on campus. Their goals included securing release time for secretaries to take classes, providing time to meet to share what was going on campus-wide, and encouraging professional development.

Through the years the group has evolved. While still promoting themselves, they have widened their scope of goals to include funding student scholarships, providing some funding for the college educational foundation, and working together to contact political representatives about concerns. The group has also expanded to include all support staff at MECC, because they realize there is strength in unity.

Success Means Support from the Administration

For a classified staff group to be successful, it must have the support of the president of the college. When the MECC group first began, it had the full support of the MECC president at that time, Dr. George Vaughn. Today, that support is continued by MECC President Ruth Smith who meets with the classified employees at their request to discuss issues affecting both the college and the classified staff. She has also fully supported professional development for MECC classified personnel.

Administrators may be more supportive of a classified organization if they examine the benefits the college can reap from such a group. Happy employees are better able to cope with students, tight budgets, and a larger workload. Professional development is one of the ways to keep employees happy. An organized group can discover effective ways to provide inexpensive (sometimes free!) professional development for staff.

ACE Provides a Role Model for Other Groups

In order to establish an effective professional association for classified personnel, other colleges may want to study MECC's group, including its function and setup.

ACE leadership consists of two co-chairs, a secretary, a treasurer, a fund-raising chair, an education chair, and a professional development chair. The latter three chairs have a committee that helps them with their work. They also elect a representative for the college council. That person comes from the general population of classified employees because the person represents both ACE members and non-members.

While some groups may prefer a president and vice-president, ACE elects co-chairs for two reasons. First,

decisions are more easily and fairly made when there are two people to weigh the pros and cons of a situation. Second, it is easier for two people to share the responsibilities of arranging meetings and all other details that the position entails.

The co-chairs are responsible for many things. They meet with the president to discuss problems or to represent the group when plans for college functions are underway. They also represent ACE at important college events, such as the president's inauguration or special meetings. The co-chairs are one strong voice representing many ACE voices.

While the roles of secretary and treasurer are self-explanatory, the fund-raising chair does more than the name implies. It is important that this chair be held by someone who is very organized. Committee members for this chair must also be organized hard workers.

This office is very important, because the chair is responsible not only for coming up with ideas to raise money for charitable projects but must also see that the work is carried out. In addition to raising funds for projects, the programs developed by this committee make the organization more visible to students, faculty, administrators and the public.

Money is raised in a variety of ways. During the school year, ACE members sell popcorn, soup, taco salads, hot dogs, and other food items. The association usually buys more expensive items, such as hamburger meat for chili, with members bringing accompanying items.

The sales are usually held for a three-hour period. All offices are covered while members take turns managing the booth. Because much of the money raised is used for student scholarships, most supervisors will let persons leave the office for a period of 30 minutes to an hour to help with the booth. Usually three or four people are at the booth at a time.

Other fund-raising activities include food sales during the college's annual Home Crafts Days and during special events of the college. ACE also caters the college's graduation. The group prepares the same foods that a regular caterer would and provides many more people to wait on graduates, their families, and visitors to the college. Plus, MECC classified staff are all trained to keep smiling and talking!

Most members do not mind donating items, time, or money to help with fund raising because they know that small donations generate money to be used for charitable causes.

ACE Projects

ACE members sponsor many worthwhile projects on and off campus, including beautification projects for the MECC campus, a food fund for needy students, assistance with medical emergencies in the community, awards for campus special events (such as the Talent Show), and donations to the MECC Educational Foundation.

During exam weeks, ACE provides coffee, hot chocolate, cookies and other refreshments for both day and night students. At Christmas, the group decorates the

campus with trees, poinsettias, and other holiday decorations. ACE also makes donations to needy students at Christmas, to the Kiwanis toy drive, and to the area shelter for abused women and children. In addition, ACE has donated money to area public school students who need the funds to travel to Washington or other places for workshops.

ACE helped pay expenses for professional development training for classified staff last year. The group occasionally has luncheons and brunches and sends flowers to hospitalized members or to members who have had a death in the family. ACE's most important cause, however, is the student scholarship that is awarded each year.

Student Scholarships

Each year, ACE awards one full-semester scholarship to a deserving student. Early in the semester, signs are posted announcing that the scholarship is available and listing the deadline for application. After the deadline has been reached, the committee meets to screen applications and select a recipient. Selection is based on grade point average, financial need, a letter of recommendation from the faculty, and a statement of why the student wishes to receive the scholarship.

After the selection process, the recipient is notified and is invited to attend one of the monthly ACE meetings in order to be presented with a check. A light reception is held in honor of the recipient, and the members are able to chat with the student. This gives members a chance to learn more about the student and gives the student a chance to find out more about ACE.

Last year ACE was faced with the unique situation of a three-way tie. Luckily, each student was from a different county in the MECC service area, so ACE awarded $100 to each of the three recipients.

Scholarships provide the means for classified personnel to say "thank you" to MECC students. The awards also show students the importance of putting something back into the community.

While ACE believes that it is important to do things for students, the group also realizes the importance of doing something for themselves. For that reason, the ACE professional development committee is also very important.

Professional Development

Professional development is important for a variety of reasons. It provides a means to learn new skills, hone existing skills, study customer (student) service, and improve lifestyles. For those reasons, ACE holds special programs at each monthly meeting.

While many classified staff believe that professional development serves the purpose of making workers better at their jobs, it is important not to fall into the trap of believing that the programs must directly relate to job improvement. Sometimes programs that are of more general interest to members should be offered.

According to an article in the Summer 1989 issue of *Community College*

Review (Frase and Piland, "Breaking the Silence About Faculty Rewards"):

> Much of the literature regarding community college faculty rewards refers to rewards for motivational purposes. This line of thinking suggests that faculty require motivation to achieve excellent performance...motivation in this context is viewed as an "internal generator" that is influenced by motivational factors.

This same concept applies to staff. An unmotivated staff is a dissatisfied staff. Classified staff can all do their jobs, but to actually treat students as customers and to have them go away satisfied, staff must look at service as more than a job. They have to want to help people.

Don't we all know someone who comes to work, does a job correctly, but rarely smiles, will not go out of the way to help anyone, and refuses to do any work that is not outlined by the job description? Are most students able to relate to that person? Do most students enjoy contact with that person? Do other co-workers enjoy contact with that person?

It is important to boost the morale of those who are doing a good job so that they do not get just as dispirited as these "Well, at least it's a job" people. These "good workers" must also understand that they should not feel guilty about attending a program that is for personal enrichment rather than job improvement, because it will lighten their moods and increase their satisfaction with conditions at work.

At MECC, 20-30 minute programs are held at each meeting with the full support of the president. Not everyone gets to attend, since every office is kept open. Workers take turns attending programs in order to keep the offices functioning. Last year, programs ranged from customer service training to a self-defense workshop to EMT training. This year, a counselor who does hypnotism visited ACE.

While some training may require funding, most of the training is performed as a free public service by highly qualified individuals both on and off campus. Some ACE members have traveled to a local hospital for free health workshops on topics like menopause, breast cancer prevention, and diabetes.

Professional development increases job satisfaction, but what are the options for unsatisfied workers?

Build Political Representation Both On and Off Campus

On campus, the classified employees elect a representative to the college council each year. The purpose of the college council is to serve as an advisory committee for the president. It does not serve as a decision making body but enables the president to get feedback from all campus groups on pertinent issues brought before the council. The college council is composed of all administrators, two faculty representatives, one representative from both the classified staff and the student body. Anyone on campus can submit items for the agenda.

To make ACE voices heard off-campus, ACE has organized successful

letter writing campaigns to political representatives. The VCCA plays an important role in these efforts by keeping MECC classified members informed and by supplying the group with information that would not ordinarily be available to them.

ACE Strengthens the Idea That We're All in This Together

Political action is only one of the many ways we work together as a group. Unity is important for strengthening the inner support structure of a college and for boosting morale. It also creates a better working environment.

The creation of a professional group for the classified staff of a college is one of the ways to build unity on a campus. Remember, satisfied employees are happy employees and happy employees treat students with respect and courtesy. A happy employee will hold back a retort to a rude student, sympathize with a downtrodden student, and encourage a despondent student not to give up.

One final fact about the MECC Classified Association: ninety-seven percent of ACE members are graduates of the college or have taken classes at MECC. ACE may be the wind beneath the wings, but because of the group, MECC is soaring higher and higher in the eyes of students and the local community.

Tamyra Kennedy is currently a secretary for Tennessee's Early Intervention System at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City. Previously she served for four years as an information officer at Mountain Empire Community College in Big Stone Gap, Virginia. While at MECC, she was active in the Association of Classified Employees. She was a speaker at the 1989 and 1990 conventions of the Virginia Community Colleges Association.

A Report on Project International Emphasis: Internationalizing Our Campus

by Celeste S. Makrevis

When Libby Davis and I attended the Project International Emphasis (PIE) Institute in the summer of 1990, we were very excited about internationalizing our campus. The question was, however, what could we actually do at our small, rural college?

We decided that our first step should be to seek the support and commitment of our college administration. We made an appointment with Dr. Terry King, our Dean of Instruction and Student Services. He very enthusiastically added his support to our project. As we discussed our project and ideas with Dr. King, it quickly became apparent that we needed to form a committee in order to realize our plans and goals.

We formed a committee with sociology and mathematics faculty members, our student activities coordinator and our planning and development coordinator, as well as the original three enthusiasts. Our President, Dr. John Backels, also lent his support at our first meeting.

The committee developed a change plan for Dabney Lancaster. In our change plan for each project, we identified a person who should have primary responsibility for that project. We also identified a project date of implementation so that we could keep track of our progress. We tried to keep our goals realistic in terms of manpower and resources available to our campus. Since we have fewer than 850 annualized FTE's and fewer than 30 full-time teaching faculty, this must in some ways limit our scope. However, within our change plan, we are looking for methods of reaching out to larger organizations to take advantage of larger resources.

We have joined with six other community colleges in Southwest Virginia to form the Southwest International Exchange, an idea originating at the Project International Emphasis Institute this past summer. We decided to meet together to share information, ideas, resources, and enthusiasm. We are meeting on a regular basis and have exchanged faculty and counsellor modules. We are now working on a project for this coming Spring, which will help increase international awareness on our campuses. We have also begun work on a project with an international emphasis that looks ahead to

1992-1993. Key to these projects is finding appropriate funding.

We are also looking at various methods of promoting international travel for our students, staff and faculty. I will be coordinating a tour of Mexico this summer. As a committee, we are also encouraging faculty to apply for the Fulbright Fellowship Program. As special opportunities for international travel arise, we will be encourage participation.

In addition, we will be encouraging the use of the PIE video which was made from our exciting meetings at the PIE Institute and the VCCA meetings in October.

As part of the original PIE grant, we will also be encouraging four faculty members and one student counsellor to complete international emphasis modules. Mrs. Davis and I have already completed our modules, and these are available, along with all of the modules developed as a result of the PIE Institute, to our staff and faculty.

Our Student Activities Coordinator, Paige Kern, will be coordinating a lecture series for the community. The series will be presented by people who have travelled internationally from our community. She will also be coordinating a lunch with an international emphasis. These projects have been funded by the Bridge Grant which our college received this year.

We plan to use the results of a survey which we are conducting of local businesses to assess area international needs, addressing questions such as: Should we be offering a conversational foreign language? Which countries are local businesses having most contact with? How can we better prepare our students for international contacts they will have after graduation?

Our Planning and Development Coordinator, Susan Sponagle, is working on two important projects: (1) investigating the possibility of having an exchange student on our campus; (2) screening grants for possible grants for our international projects.

Our sociology faculty, John Barnes, serves as advisor to the Amnesty International group on our campus. He also takes a group to Virginia Tech's International Day every Spring. This coming Spring, we hope to bring faculty and staff for this important event, too.

We are planning to develop a brochure about the resources that we have available on our campus with an international emphasis. And we plan to publish regular updates in our "Communicator" so that everyone on campus will be aware of activities with an international flavor.

Mrs. Davis has two presentations scheduled to complement the Bridge project during the spring semester. A panel discussions by representatives from local industries conducting business internationally is targeted for students enrolled in an occupational technical program who are interested in employment with an industry participating in international trade. The second panel discussion, designed especially for students enrolled in a transfer or two-year degree program who plan to pursue an international career, will be conducted by the community members, faculty, and students with international employment experience.

An institution-conducted survey has identified more than 600 direct jobs in area industrial firms involved with the international markets. These panel discussions are designed to assist students in identifying opportunities and requirements for internationally-related employment in these local industries, as well as in other industries.

Our Project International Committee meets regularly to discuss new ideas and update our Change Plan. Having an international committee provides us with a framework for action. Developing a change plan helps us to define specific goals for the project. Achieving those goals marks our progress towards internationalizing our campus.

Celeste Smith Makrevis is an assistant professor of nursing at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College in Clifton Forge. As Campus Academic Facilitator, she attended the Project International Emphasis Institute sponsored by the Virginia Community College System during the summer of 1990. She chairs the Project International Emphasis committee at Dabney S. Lancaster and is a member of Southwest International Exchange.

Recycling

Brian Hansen

On this day in our twenty-third spring,
bereft of children and youth,
we surrender more than glass, newspapers, cans
as tall oaks and maples watch.

The bottles we drop
shatter and shard,
returning me to
the childhood thrill of
breaking bottles on railroad tracks.
Beside you, I watch the curve of your hand,
a wisp of your hair blown free.

Beneath this lapis dome and
before these budding trees,
we step away quickly
hand in hand
renewed.

Northern Virginia Community College

Longitudinal Analysis of Student Progress: The Status Among Virginia's Community Colleges

by Charles Sieracki

The Virginia community colleges have made progress in collecting, analyzing, evaluating, and reporting student data in response to the state mandate for student outcomes assessment, federal disclosure requirements, accrediting agency standards, productivity studies, affirmative action studies, program evaluations, and other accountability measures. In order to measure student outcomes, the capacity to track student cohort groups has emerged as a particular need. However, progress has not been uniform among the community colleges, especially those with computer programming resources. Some are forging ahead while others are struggling. The purpose of this report is three-fold: it offers a definition of student tracking; it clarifies some of the advances made by the community colleges; and it proposes that the VCCS generate ways to track student progress more effectively and more efficiently.

At a workshop in March 1990 at the 4th Annual Conference of the Virginia Assessment Group (VAG), a draft of a survey on student tracking was reviewed by representatives of community colleges and senior institutions. In May, concurrent with the survey effort, the deans and provosts of the VCCS adopted a resolution "that the Virginia Community College System give high priority to developing and implementing a model system of longitudinal analysis of student progress from matriculation through employment placement." In June, a survey of all the Virginia community colleges was conducted (a) to assist in the development of a comprehensive definition of student tracking and (b) to ascertain the progress of each college in analyzing group data using student-specific data bases. To avoid confusion with the student tracking system developed at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, the description *longitudinal analyses of student progress* with the acronym *LASP* was used in the survey. All twenty-three colleges responded to the survey.

Each college was asked to rate a list of components as to their importance within a definition, using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being less important and 5 being most important. Each component received a rating of 3 or higher by the majority of the survey responders. The question with the tabulated responses is presented in Table 1.

The questionnaire also clarified the progress made by the colleges to

Table 1

Rating of Components As to Their Importance to LASP Definition

	Number of Responses (1 Least Important to 5 Most Important)					
	1	2	3	4	5	NR
WHO						
1. of individual students	1	3	7	4	7	1
2. and groups of students (developmental, curriculum-placed, graduates)	-	-	-	5	17	1
WHEN						
3. from their first registration	-	-	3	1	18	1
4. to withdrawal	-	-	2	6	14	1
5. or stop-out	-	1	2	5	14	1
6. or graduation	1	-	-	3	18	1
7. and post-graduation status (employment or college transfer)	1	-	3	5	13	1
WHAT Variables to be tracked may include						
8. age, sex, race, other demographics	-	-	6	7	9	1
9. retention rates	-	-	1	7	13	2
10. grade point averages	-	1	3	10	8	1
11. preparation at entry	1	1	5	5	9	2
12. full-time, part-time status, etc.	1	2	5	10	4	1
HOW						
13. The processes would be generated within the Student Information System (SIS)	-	-	-	5	17	1
14. with expanded fields for entering other data (employment, licensing scores)	1	-	3	5	13	1
15. and uploading and downloading capabilities (high school data, ASSET data, etc.)	-	-	2	4	16	1
WHY						
The purpose of the LASP processes would be to meet needs relating to						
16. student outcomes assessment	-	-	-	2	20	1
17. disclosure requirements of the U.S. Department of Education	3	-	4	7	8	1
18. the Task Force on Remediation Report	-	1	3	9	8	2
19. SACS accreditation studies	1	-	-	10	11	1
20. academic program review	-	-	1	5	16	1
21. affirmative action studies	-	2	7	8	5	1
22. enrollment management and forecasting	1	-	7	10	4	1
23. marketing and recruitment strategies	-	2	10	7	3	1
24. and student advising	-	-	4	4	14	1

develop longitudinal analyses of students progress before, during, and after their college enrollment. Colleges were asked (a) to identify the various groups they could analyze using a student-specific data base, (b) to identify the status of their analyses, whether they were implemented or piloted, in the early stages, or whether the college was only at the point of being interested, and (c) to identify their method of data analysis, whether by hand or by computer. Table 2 shows the tabulated responses to these questions.

More than half of the colleges reported they have implemented or are piloting the analysis of student data groupings in eight or eleven areas provided in the survey. Approximately one-fourth to one-third of the colleges reported they have not piloted or implemented analyses in three of the eleven areas. Several colleges identified other areas of analysis, in addition to the ones offered in the survey.

Graduate employment follow-up studies had the highest reported rate of implementation among the colleges. This is not surprising; however, it does raise the question of the techniques in use among the colleges. It may be that some colleges' graduate follow-up studies are not student identifiable, and therefore the data cannot be merged with other student data to provide for more detailed analyses.

In only three areas did one-half or more of the colleges report using computerized methods of analyses exclusively. A majority of the colleges reported using a combination of manual and computer methods in seven of the eleven areas. This question on the survey appears to have created some confusion because it had asked for a response to either a manual or computer system of analysis. The responders accurately pointed out that both methods are most often used.

Discussion

Survey results show a wide variation in the methods of longitudinal analyses in use for assessment of student progress. Many colleges have yet to benefit from effective computer programs. Clearly, many of the colleges have a lot to gain from sharing computer programs and techniques of analysis. All of the colleges reported that they were willing to share their techniques, except for one college which felt it was too early in its development in this area. The VCCS Student Information System (SIS) maintains a great deal of information on students which is especially useful to measure faculty productivity and to assure accountability. However, the Student Information System is not designed to readily provide information for LASP reports. For example, SIS computer programs can easily list any or all students from a given academic session who enroll for credit courses during a subsequent session or who ultimately graduate. However, information is not readily available to report how long it takes each individual student, full and part-time, to complete the degree. Also, employment or transfer status of the students is not part of the database. The retention rate of students who move from one course to the next course in the sequence is easily tabulated. However, analyzing the relationship between high school course

Table 2

Colleges' Reported Progress with Analyzing Student Identifiable Group Data

Percentage of 23 Colleges Reporting

Data Groups	Implemented	Piloting	Early Stages	Interested	No Response	Method of Analysis: Manual	Computer	Both
Academic Entry Assessment & Subsequent Academic Success	52	13	17	17	-	22	43	17
Developmental Students & Subsequent Academic Success	57	9	26	9	-	22	57	13
Student Completion by Curriculum	48	13	9	30	-	17	43	9
Retention by Demographics (age, race, sex, etc.)	48	13	17	22	-	4	70	4
Retention by Enrollment Status (full/part-time, returning, etc.)	61	4	13	17	4	-	70	4
Graduate Employment Follow-up	70	13	17	-	-	39	39	22
Transfer Student Follow-up	57	22	13	9	-	43	35	13
Reverse Transfer Student Profiles	9	4	9	61	17	13	-	4
High School Profiles	35	4	9	39	13	-	26	17
Current Student Satisfaction Data	39	-	17	43	-	22	30	4
Enrollment Profiles	57	-	13	13	17	9	61	-

Number of Colleges Willing to Share Methods of Analysis Within the VCCS

Yes	No	No Response
20	1	2

41

grades, placement test scores, course grades, and retention is much more difficult for most colleges.

Virginia community colleges need access to programs which will more easily capture and manipulate data and which will allow merger with other appropriate information. The data needs to be available on individual students so that all appropriate information on varied groupings of students or cohorts can be accessed. A complete tracking system would assemble and analyze the data regardless of the composition of the cohort or the type of information required by the report. In response to the May resolution of the deans and provosts, Chancellor Pierce appointed a Task Force to consider the issue of student tracking on July 31, 1990. It is hoped that the findings of this survey will assist the Task Force in its deliberations.

Recommendations

Based on this survey's findings, the following recommendations are offered:

(1) The VCCS list and describe in a uniform manner all of the methods being used in support of longitudinal analyses of student progress;

(2) The VCCS maintain a central library of LASP programs complete with directions for immediate access by the college;

(3) The VCCS ascertain that LASP programs should be developed; and

(4) The VCCS develop and implement a plan to generate and disseminate the needed programs by coordinating the resources throughout the system.

Based on the responses of the colleges, the following definition is suggested:

> Longitudinal Analyses of Student Progress (LASP) refers to a computer-based data collection for the analysis of the relative progress of individual students and groups of students, from their first registration to withdrawal, stop-out, or graduation, to post-graduation status. Variables to be tracked may include age, sex, race, and other demographic items such as retention rates, grade point averages, preparation at entry, and full-time or part-time status. The processes would be generated within the Student Information System (SIS) with expanded fields for entering other data and uploading and downloading capabilities.
>
> The purpose of the LASP processes would be to meet needs relating to student outcomes assessment, disclosure requirements of the U. S. Department of Education, the Task Force on Remediation Report, SACS accreditation studies, academic program review, affirmative action studies, enrollment management and forecasting, marketing and recruitment strategies, and student advising.

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Virginians for Virginia: The Partnership between SwVCC and the Virginia Army National Guard for Economic Development

by Charles R. King and Pat Bussard

As part of its effort to initiate economic development opportunities for its service region of three and a half counties in the economically depressed southwest portion of the Commonwealth, Southwest Virginia Community College (SwVCC) developed a program with the Virginia Army National Guard titled *Virginians for Virginia*. This initiative eventually had a five to seven million dollar impact on the region.

Virginians for Virginia was an idea developed by SwVCC's Dean of Administrative and Financial Services, Dr. Richard C. Hudson and the Army National Guard; it was supported by the institution's President and administrators. We felt that during the Guard's annual training, its engineering expertise could be used to make a difference in the economic development of the region. Operation *Virginians for Virginia* had its beginning with a local engineer unit of the guard, Company D of Richlands. Company D was already working on a project on the SwVCC campus during its once-a-month weekend training when the idea for project expansion was suggested.

The theme *Virginians for Virginia* was penned by Chief Warrant Officer III Raymond Bowles. The college was asked to produce a video that would encourage the Virginia Army National Guard Command to hold annual training in our region. The finished tape, titled *Virginians for Virginia* was viewed by Command and permission to begin the operation was granted. Under the operation, known by the Army as "Operation Stutzman," a battalion of over 700 troops trained in engineering bivouacked in two of the college's counties (Russell and Tazewell) and on the SwVCC campus for the Guard's two-week annual training, June 1 through June 15, 1991.

The 276th Engineer Battalion (Combat) under the command of Lieutenant Colonel David K. Stutzman moved 200,000 cubic yards of earth using 13,000 work-hours a day during the two-week stay. The Guard was dispersed on projects throughout an 800 mile square area between the Bluefield Industrial Park in Tazewell County to the Cumberland Plateau Regional Industrial Park in Russell County.

The economic impact of the Guard's stay in the region is estimated to be between five and seven million dollars. The 276th purchased as many supplies and services as was possible from local vendors, ranging from food

to dry cleaning. Funds were not available for any of the projects in which the Guard engaged; therefore, project completion would have been impossible without the assistance of the 276th.

Benefit to SwVCC

The positive results of having the 276th perform annual training maneuvers in the area were substantial. The Guard developed an athletic complex. The SwVCC complex includes a football field, full-size track, baseball field and parking lot areaall at no cost to the college except for the price of materials used in the building process, much of which was donated. The 276th also built seven pavilions at the college, one of which is restricted for firing range purposes. The Southwest Law Enforcement Academy, located on the college's campus, needed its firing range extended, and the Guard completed this project. A children's activity area was developed which included a "Big Toy" much like the ones outside many fast-foot restaurantswith a pavilion close-by for picnics. In addition, the Guard constructed a storage/work area for the institution. All of the projects were completed or nearly completed before the Guard finished its annual training.

Benefit to the Economic Development of Russell County

Southwest Virginia Community College was not the only one to benefit from the Guard's expertise. The 276th worked on several projects in Russell County: the Cumberland Plateau Regional Industrial Park, the Russell County Courthouse parking lot, and the County landfill.

Benefit to the Economic Development of Tazewell County

Tazewell County residents were also able to benefit by the 276th's work on the Bluefield Industrial Park, County landfill, and the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. An important project to the people of Tazewell County was the Cavitts Creek Recreation Park, which is in a beautiful location complete with a lovely lake. Prior to the Guard's arrival, the only way to get access to the area was across a cow path. The 276th did massive road work to make the area more accessible; as a result, Tazewell County will be more attractive to tourists and prospective businesses and industries. County Administrator Vern Bechtel expects that grant funding will help make possible the completion of the Cavitts Creek project.

Benefit to the Virginia Army National Guard

The training the 276th received in Southwest Virginia was equivalent to operating on terrain such as can be found in Germany or Honduras. By operating in mountainous, wooded topography, the Guard was able to receive training that they would not have otherwise received on the military posts where annual training usually takes place. In one of the local newspapers a member of the 276th was quoted as saying, "We've been toting

boxes around for ten years, and now we finally got to see what was in them."

Three local units from Richlands, Vansant and Tazewell are part of the Battalion. Other units include West Point and Powhatan. In addition to the Battalion's five units, two additional companies, the 1031st Engineer Company from Gate City and a slice of the 3647th Maintenance Company from Richmond supported the Battalion.

Media Coverage and Community Response

During the course of the two-week annual training 22 articles appeared in local newspapers; the Associated Press picked up the story, and it appeared in newspapers across the Commonwealth. At the closing ceremony on June 13, ten media representatives, including three of the four local network television stations, attended and subsequently published or aired stories. Notices were carried on local radio stations. Six stories on the four local network television stations about *Operation Virginians for Virginia* were aired during June 1 through June 15.

The positive response from the community was immense and was reflected in several editorials written concerning the Guard's stay. In the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, the Editor wrote in an editorial titled "Different Need: VA Guard Does More than Protect the Peace" (June 19, 1991):

> the Virginia National Guard came to Tazewell and Russell counties for its annual training, and in two weeks made important changes in the counties...thanks to the organizers who arranged for the Guard's stay, most notably the movers and shakers of Southwest Virginia Community College, who once again have proven their institution a prime initiator of community action. Thanks most of all to the 276th Engineer Battalion (Combat) for a job well done.

The Clinch Valley News (June 19, 1991) carried the following:

> The area benefitted greatly from the presence of 700 National Guardsmen...not only did they work on many worthwhile projects, they also contributed to the area's economy...Our hats are off to all the individuals, and Southwest Virginia Community College for coordinating this project. It's a great idea, and, again, we hope it will continue.

Charles R. King is President of Southwest Virginia Community College and is very active in the economic development efforts of the SwVCC region.

Pat Bussard is Coordinator of College Communications at SwVCC.

Teaching Methods That Impact on Student Retention

by Eric Hibbison, Gayle Childers, Susan Wood, and Barbara Glenn

The Basic Academic Strengths Enrichment (BASE) Project at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College began with instruction in learning theory in 1989 by Dr. Mary S. Woodburn of Longwood College and continues with cross-disciplinary and cross-campus discussions of methods like those reported here. One guiding principle was to teach the "whole student" by developing methods that drew out students to monitor their learning (metacognition); to master content (cognition); and to have positive experiences (affect) in our developmental and credit courses, including learning by doing (psychomotor skills).

Some methods are simply principles, such as having math students put rules and equations into words. Some methods are demonstrations, such as using Lewis Carroll's "Twas Brillig" to show students the nature of answering questions without full understanding of content (and revealing to students their inherent knowledge of syntax). The cross-disciplinary focus included using "cloze" passages (demonstrated by a reading teacher) in math to show the value of context and to test crucial math terms. It stressed the importance of reading for math students by training them to read math using a three-page manual and demonstrating the benefits of slowing down, re-reading, reading with pencil and paper in order to try out samples, and many other suggestions for active reading in math texts. Such techniques cause students to monitor their understanding; they train students in ways to enhance their learning, and they work on students' attitudes about courses like math and English by getting students to learn by doing. Other methods, like those shown below, involve frameworks or patterns for organizing one lesson by using doubling, selected lessons by using the yarn sort, or whole courses by using a response journal and related activities.

Doubling

Doubling can be applied to many tasks. The basic routine is to have students try the task on their own first, then to compare their results with a peer's results on the task, and finally to present the peer's results to another pair of students to discuss all results.

Suggested tasks in the writing classroom include sentence-combining, judging the merits of a sample or model or completing part of an exercise.

In the demonstration below, a sentence-combining passage is offered to show the pedagogical and social rewards of doubling. The activity is "holistic" in that it causes students to monitor their work compared with that of peers (so it is metacognitive). Sentence-combining takes advantage of writers' native sense of English, so the activity has a cognitive dimension. Doubling forces students to regard each other's work and to speak and listen for the good of the pair and the group; this social dimension is affective, and usually it is fun.

Directions: Working in groups of four and with your professor's help, do the following:

(1) Take one section of the sentence-combining task shown below, a paragraph from an essay called "Montana Bear Hunt." Figure out a way to put all of the information in each numbered list into just one sentence.
(2) Show your results to a partner and help each other consider other alternatives or ways to improve the wording of the lists you two worked on. Pick out the words or methods you used to combine sentences.
(3) Present your partner's section to the other two people in your group. Read the version you settled on together, and point out how the combinations were made.
(4) Listen as the other partners tell about their results.
(5) For the group, turn in one paragraph and a list of the combining words and methods used to make that paragraph.

From "Montana Bear Hunt"

(a) There was a path. The path was made by animals. The path was south of camp.
(b) I started down. I walked. The walk was less than a hundred yards.
(c) I saw tracks. The tracks were made by a grizzly. The tracks were in the snow. The tracks were big. The tracks were fresh.
(d) My heart broke into a run. I felt sick. I felt sweaty.
(e) Something was inside. It said go on. It said follow the tracks.
(f) The tracks led down the mountain. The tracks led into the forest.
(g) My senses were turned up. My senses were at 150 percent.
(h) I stalked deeper. I stalked into the forest. The forest was like a jungle. The woods were large. The woods were dark.
(i) A calmness filled the forest. The calmness was strange. Everything got very still.
(j) An intruder was somewhere. An intruder somehow managed. An intruder penetrated the forest.
(k) Everything knew. Everything was around me. The intruder was capable of destruction. The destruction would be great.

[Advanced: After putting all of the ideas in each numbered list into one sentence, see if you can condense more than one group into a single, well constructed sentence. You choose which groups to combine together.]

Benefits of doubling:

- Students act as colleagues.
- Students pool knowledge of syntax.
- Students work out stylistic preferences among themselves.

Limitations of doubling:

- Focus must be on the positive, tangible task.
- The group result is handed in.
- Finite tasks must be done in the class time allowed.

[For more on sentence combining, see the Daiker, Kerek, and Morenberg collection of articles and Pitkin's unique text listed in the bibliography.]

The Yarn Sort

The Yarn Sort involves hands-on activities, peer interaction, and color. Added interest and variety in classroom activities creates an improved focus on the subject under study. This technique was piloted first with faculty participants in the BASE project and then used repeatedly with mathematics students during the past three semesters with successful results. Although the discipline represented is mathematics, suggestions are included for modifying the technique for other content areas.

The "Yarn Sort" activity is suitable for varied levels of mathematics as the examples will show. The activity requires some planning and preparation of materials, but its benefits have proved worthwhile as measured by feedback from students. In a yarn sort activity, students are given one or more pieces of colored yarn each (per pair if the students are working together). Students are also given two sets of slips of paper, with each set printed on a different colored paper. One set of slips represents categories; the other represents examples. The yarn is configured so that each category slip fits in a section of the desk top segmented by the yarn. It is helpful if the students are provided with scissors. Students cut apart category slips and example slips, with the instructor asking them to direct their thinkingas they are cuttingto what the categories mean. Then students sort the examples by category, placing the examples in the appropriate section identified by the proper category slip.

Figure 1 shows a yarn sort activity designed for a developmental mathematics course in arithmetic or beginning algebra. Categories for this activity can include even, odd, prime, composite, perfect square, multiple of some number, etc. Yarn is initially configured into two non-overlapping circles with two categories selected by the instructor and placed inside each circle. As students begin to sort numbers into categories, questions arise about correct placement, especially when the categories overlap or are "nested." With overlapping categories such as those in Figure 1, students realize (perhaps prompted by a question from the instructor) that some numbers may fit in more than one category, and one way to show this is by overlapping the circles, as in Figure 2. As the students work on this activity, the instructor is free to work with individuals to reinforce correct sorting or ask appropriate questions to correct or refine sorting. It is helpful to provide a baggie

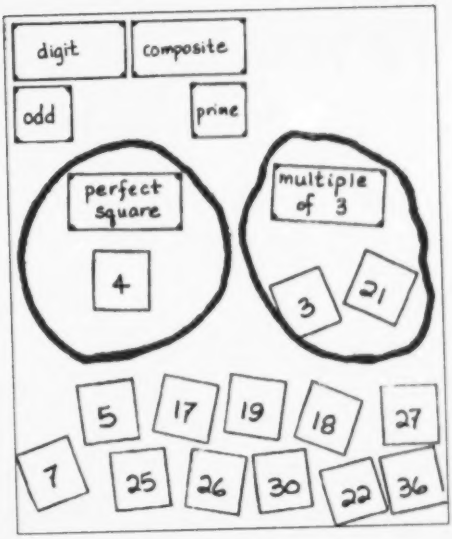

Figure 1
The Beginning of
an Arithmetic Yarn Sort

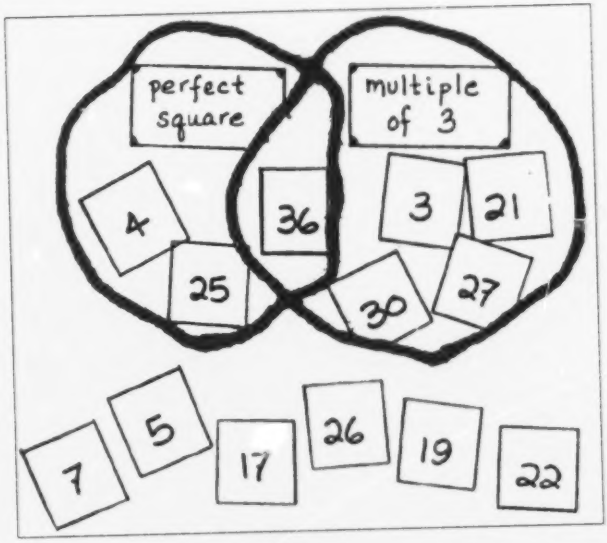

Figure 2
The Arithmetic Yarn Sort
Refined by the Student

or paper clip at the end of the activity for students who wish to take the materials home for additional practice.

Figure 3 illustrates an application of the yarn sort to an algebra setting. In this example, the categories reflect various methods of factoring algebraic expressions – methods which have been covered previously in class. Yarn should be configured in a " + " shape as shown. Examples include expressions factorable through one of these four techniques together with expressions which are not factorable and expressions which require two types of factoring. With the expected examples, students are challenged to demonstrate knowledge of all four methods of factoring and to recognize when each method is appropriate to use. The students discover the need for and then create a "not factorable" category. In the case of expressions requiring more than one method of factoring, sorting based on the first method of factoring works and creates an opportunity to further sort within that category, based on the second method of factoring. One of the greatest benefits of this activity is the students' first-hand discovery of what they need to know; feedback is immediate and separated from a stressful graded situation such as a quiz.

In Figure 4, the concept of a mathematical function often addressed in a college algebra course is the context for a yarn sort activity. Students are presented with two categories, "is a function" and "isn't a function," and asked to sort relations expressed in a variety of ways into the two categories. One piece of yarn is used to separate the desk top into two halves. Each student's understanding of the concept of a function is developed, refined, and solidified through hands-on activity. This same configuration could be used in any content area with "understand" and "don't understand" as the categories and vocabulary words or chapter concepts as the examples. Students might be well served by such a review technique at the end of a unit, with the follow-up activity of pairing students together to explain concepts so that by the end of the activity, all examples are in the "understand" category!

Through this simple-to-use activity, students are engaged in learning; they focus with their hands and thoughts on the task at hand. Sleeping and daydreaming disappear as a low-stress environment for student participation is created. Although student interaction is encouraged and gradually occurs, the concentration-induced silence that permeates the classroom as students engage in such an activity is both fascinating and delightful. The sorting activity requires that students monitor and apply their understanding of concepts, which is a metacognitive endeavor. The cognitive domain is naturally involved through the content presented in the categories and examples. The use of color and peer interaction involve students in positive ways, accommodating the affective domain. The cutting and placement of paper slips target the psychomotor domain.

Student feedback in evaluating the yarn sort has been positive. This activity may appeal to students who respond more slowly to traditional instructional techniques. However, all students

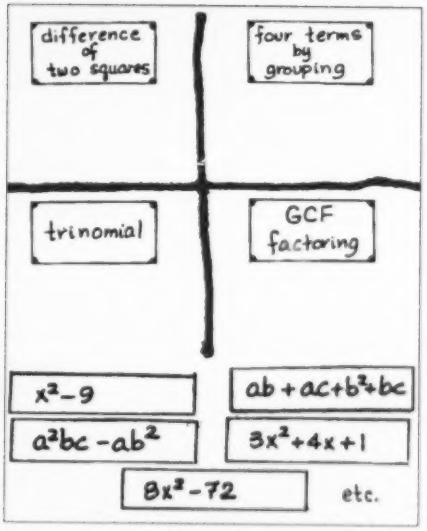

Figure 3
A Yarn Sort on Factoring
(Basic or Intermediate Algebra)

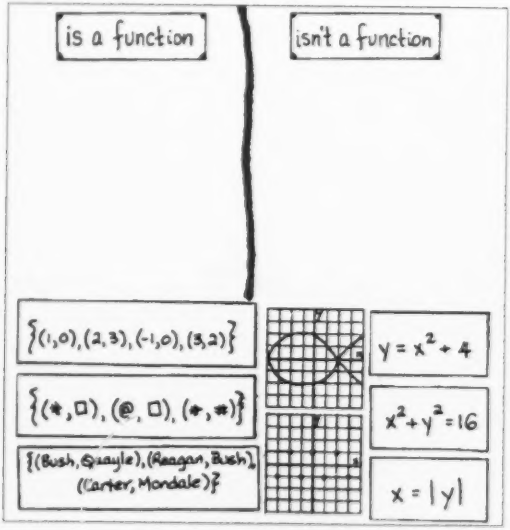

Figure 4
A Yarn Sort on Functions (College Algebra)

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complete such an activity knowing what they know, knowing it better than before the activity, and more importantly, knowing what they need to study further.

The Dialogic Journal in the Introduction to Literature Course

What instructional framework is most conducive to holistic learning? In English 112, a course with a relatively low rate of student retention, students have many needs. Metacognitively, they need a system for thinking critically about literature and, then, a system for monitoring that thinking. Cognitively, they need systems for reading, talking, and writing about literature. Affectively, students need a sense of belonging to a literary experience, of a relationship between literature and their lives and culture; and they need an atmosphere which allows them to develop naturally as readers and writers. To accommodate these needs, a model based on David Kolb's (1984) Model of Cognitive Learning Styles can be combined with contemporary reading and writing theories. Such theories are remarkably parallel. For example, Wolfgang Iser (1989) and Robert Scholes (1985) define reading as seeking meaning or creating meaning. Similarly, Rosemary Deen (1986) sees writing in the same way.

Responding to a text, the main task for students in English 112, involves what Iser sees as dynamic oscillation among the current text, what students have read before, and an interaction of these texts. In *Textual Power* Scholes calls this dynamism placing text against text. Empowering adult students for effective life-long learning, then, requires helping them to use their language and the language of the literature they read to monitor how they learn so that they can act upon the world in informed ways. This goal leads to critical reading, a process which students come to see as sometimes slow and mentally demanding but also as an exciting experience.

Much of the excitement comes through students keeping a "dialogic journal," that is, by keeping a record as they read of changes they discover, patterns they see, places where they become confused, and memories triggered by the literature. This record, kept on the right-hand page of a notebook, becomes the raw data to which students respond on the left-hand page. Students soon realize that they can create new ideas out of old ones and apply concepts to new situations. The training for keeping a dialogic journal begins with the teacher modeling the process, but students soon use their own journals to inform their class discussions and borrow more ideas from each other. These transactional discussions produce some creative ideas about responding to the literature; they also help students to internalize the concept that comprehension necessarily involves rethinking or recreating ideas as clearer concepts. The re-thinking written into their dialogic journals parallels the revisions done on writing assignments. A survey of students indicates that they appreciate both the rethinking and the revisions, as well as the feeling that they are discussing and writing their own views. They also praised criticizing literary situations

against actual cultural behavior, learning different ways to interpret literature with the teacher and their classmates.

Behind each of the activities described above – reading math, doubling, the yarn sort, and the dialogic journal – was the purpose of helping more students pass the courses involved. Yet this measure of success only hints at the greater success of helping adults to monitor their learning and to master content while enjoying lively and inviting discussion with teachers and classmates; ultimately, the independence and critical thinking bred of these experiences helps these adults to explore their own destinies in their own ways, which may be an ultimate, empowering goal of education.

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An American Visits the European Community

by Sallie D. Branscom

During the summer of 1990, I was awarded a grant by Virginia Western to study accounting practices in Europe, a wonderful opportunity to observe other educational systems and the culture of different countries. The greatest benefit of something like this is the appreciation you have for your own situation when you return. I am very grateful to have been born in the United States, to have had the education that Virginia state schools provided, and to have been employed by the Virginia Community College System.

Since most accounting in Europe is now done according to the standards for the European Community, I felt it would be easier to learn accounting principles in English. However, I found that this was not altogether true: the British and Americans do not always use the same terminology. For example, merchandise inventory in the UK is listed as stock. We think of stock as marketable securities. This can be very confusing.

My studies began at Chichester College of Technology in Chichester, England. I also visited Adapep (a small, private business school) in Arras, France, and the Frederich Feld Schule (a technical school, much like a community college) in Giessen, Germany. The European Community and its impact on business is a constant topic in business classes, so I visited the headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

The European Educational System

It is difficult to understand the college system in Europe because of the differences in secondary education. Students go to public school until they are 16; then they take exams which are either A Level or O Level. The A Level exams are for admission to the university; the O Level exams are occupational. If students get satisfactory scores on the A Levels, they may be admitted to the university, and their education is free; however, they are only allowed to apply to five schools. There is a possibility they will not be admitted to any of them, and a year will be lost until they can try again. This is even more scary because they do not get the scores from the A Levels until August and school starts in September. According to a professor at CCOT, if students do not have the scores to get into the university of their choice, their parents may be able to pay for them to attend there.

If students do not want to attend the university, they may take the O Levels

and get jobs. The scores on the O Levels will help determine what kind of job they will get. They may continue their education with something called "Work Release." These students take classes at schools like Chichester, usually only part of one day per week. At the end of the term, they will take a higher O Level for their particular occupation. There are O Levels in Accounting, Secretarial Skills, Building Trades, etc. Chichester College also has students taking English, math, chemistry, etc., so that they could retake the A Levels, get higher scores, and then enter the university. The secondary schools also offer postgraduate classes for higher scores on the A Levels which seems to be a duplication of effort and expense. There is no transfer credit as we know it, only the placement because of the score on the A Level test.

The number of high school students going to college is very different from the United States. According to Richard Critchfield in the May, 1990, issue of *World Monitor*, only 14 percent of British students go on to college (traditional four-year schools) compared to 50 percent of high school students in the United States (38).

The college or university system is also quite different. Law is an undergraduate degree, with only one additional year of school to sit for the bar. Most accountants (over 50 percent) do not take any accounting at the university. They major in some other liberal arts curriculum. They then get a job with an accounting firm and take accounting classes at night. There are four levels of accounting certification with the highest level, the Chartered Accountant, being similar to our Certified Public Accountant designation.

College Funding

Like Virginia, England is having a budget crunch that has affected colleges greatly. Chichester College is currently funded by the County of Sussex. Starting in September 1990, each school must be self-supporting. As a result, the college is starting several commercial ventures. One of the most interesting of these was the development of software by the faculty under a contract with Lloyd's of London which produced income for the college general fund.

Teaching Situation

Chichester College, the same age as Virginia Western, has approximately 2000 FTE's. Since land is at such a premium in England, it has a very small campus. Course load is by seniority. All of the teachers in the business department shared one large office. The equipment provided evidently was not as sturdy as that of the VCCS, and much of it was broken. The chalkboard was a pull-down screen similar to an overhead screen. According to the May issue of *World Monitor*, this lack of equipment is prevalent in all of the state-owned schools in the UK (36).

Chichester College has many computers for student use; however, class use and lab time is limited. They have the same network as we do at VWCC for some of the computers; others are on a different network. The automation of the offices is not nearly as sophisticated as the in VCCS. They do not have

student records or accounting records on the computer, for example.

Another difference is textbook support. The textbook for beginning accounting is a much smaller paper back. There are no working papers, study guides, software, etc. The computer is not used to teach accounting at all.

The colleges in France and Germany are much more progressive. Computer use is much greater in France and all of the classrooms are very well equipped; however, they do have their accounting records on the computer. The Frederich Feld Schule does occupational training and some remedial work for higher scores on their equivalent of A Levels by computer.

Businesses in England

While I was in England, I visited the accounting departments of three businesses. Two of them were US businesses, IBM and John Wiley Publishers. The accounting department at John Wiley was using an American accounting computer program. Even though the accountant had been trained in England, he had no trouble converting. The only new account was one for fluctuations in currency.

The IBM plant was very much like an IBM plant in this country. Everything there was on computer and they were developing software for use both in Europe and the United States. All of the employees I talked with were British.

The third business I visited was the Midland Bank, a British-owned bank in Chichester with branches all over the UK. The employees that I talked with had all begun working when they were 16. None of them had gone to college at all. They wore uniforms, even employees in the accounting office. The office itself did not have modern equipment—it reminded me of a US bank about 25 years ago. The bank closed later that week for renovations, but I do not know the extent of them.

The Return Visit

Two of the teachers from Chichester came to Virginia Western in September for an international accounting seminar. It was the first trip to the United States for both of them. Some of their observations were very interesting. Barbara Darby, one of the visiting teachers, was surprised at the speed of cars on the highway—she was expecting much faster speeds and the kind of driving you see during a police chase on television. She also asked to see where the poor people lived. I think she was looking for a ghetto area like New York, again something she had seen on the movies.

Our VWCC students really enjoyed talking with Barbara. One of the interesting points was that McDonald's in Chichester does not have a Drive Thru; in fact probably none in England have a Drive Thru. (The Chichester McDonald's does not even have golden arches.) The American students were amazed at the early closing of all businesses in England. Pubs close at 10:30 p.m. and almost everything else closes at 5:30 p.m. Barbara also remarked how clean everything was at Virginia Western and what wonderful facilities

we have. She was also surprised at the lack of graffiti.

Final Observations

When I visited the headquarters of the EC in Brussels, soldiers of the Belgian Army dressed in riot gear were there guarding the building. It was encircled by army trucks and concertina wire. I was allowed in the building, but the situation was very tense. We were told that a demonstration was planned by some of the Belgian labor unions who were protesting the fact that the EC employees were paid better wages than other workers in Brussels. The strange thing about this was that there was no mention of it in any English language newspaper the next day. Had this event occurred at the United Nations, every newspaper in the world would have had a headline about the problems in the US. It seems that our problems are always enlarged by the world press.

Part of the reason for this is that we are misunderstood by Europeans. Most of the people in Europe have visited other European countries, but few have been to America, and they cannot imagine the amount of space and distance here. Americans have the reverse problem: we think of Germany or England as countries like the USA while they are not as large as Texas.

A cab driver in Chichester told us that he had read that 85 percent of Americans do not own a passport. He was probably correct, but he obviously did not understand the reason for this. If the people in Chichester want to go to the beach, they go to the south of France; and of course they need a passport. The distance is about 300 miles. If we want to go to the beach, we can go to Virginia Beach, the Carolina Beaches, or Myrtle Beach. These are distances of 200 or 300 miles also, but we do not need a passport.

The twenty-first century will see a global economy. Every country must be aware of this, and students must be taught how to deal with other cultures. Americans have a great advantage when dealing with businesses in the EC. Germany, France, and the others have fought two bloody wars during the twentieth century; they do not always trust or like each other. Many of them would be more willing to deal with Americans if we had our people trained to do business in Europe. To preserve our economy and our high standard of living, we must study other nations, their histories, economics, and accounting systems so that we can carry on intelligent business practices. We cannot wait to do this – we must start now.

Sallie D. Branscom is an associate professor of accounting at Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke where she has taught for 17 years. She is a Chancellor's Commonwealth Professor for 1991-92, and she received a grant from Virginia Western for international study in 1990.

Harrington's Corner

The following piece argues that each VCCS college should form a local legislative advocacy team which is widely representative of the college community. In the fall of 1990 the idea was offered as a proposal to the chancellor and some other leaders in the VCCS. This column would have been published in early spring 1991 had the Journal *not been delayed by funding shortages. Such legislative teams are now being formed. This piece offers some rationale for doing so.*

The Editors

Beefing up the Funding Effort

by Dick Harrington

Budget cuts scrape the very marrow of our college communities. Legislators, who hold the knife, believe higher education is fat. Not knowing *our* story, they pile us together with the multiversities. Let someone else debate whether the multiversities are fat. We're just bone.

It's time for us in the VCCS to tell our whole story. Through shared management, we can and must beef up the funding effort. I propose that the chancellor and the presidents form twenty-four teams, one for the central offices and one for each college, of administrators, board members, and support staffand call upon those teams to tell our story as they've been living it.

In Richmond and at the colleges, administrators generally believe that the VCCS funding effort should be handled by a small number of administrators and board members. Given Virginia politics, that protectiveness is understandable. But something isn't working. The knife scrapeseven at our basic services.

The chancellor, his staff, state and local board members, and the presidents take their jobs seriously and work hard to tell our story. After constructing the legislative plan, they work with the legislaturecompeting with dozens of other

interest groups. They know it's crucial to hover in the right corridor at the tight time, ready to bargain on the spot.

I applaud their work and encourage all of us to support their thoughtful orchestration of the legislative plan each year. I agree with those who say that it would harm, not help, the effort to carry bus loads of faculty, staff, students, and alumni to overwhelm the state legislature with our many needs. Virginia legislators don't like to be mobbed, and they're already mobbed by scores of lobbyists. Understandably, they've neither the time nor the inclination to hear our whole story while they're in session.

Knowing this, our administrators also try to meet with legislators between annual sessions. But something isn't working. People simply don't understand that we were dreadfully underfunded even before being cut.

If they did know, even the most fiscal conservatives would be appalled and embarrassed. That we give so much of our time and of ourselves on so little money. That the state exploits thousands of part-time faculty, paying them a mere pittance to that we can operate at all as comprehensive community colleges. That we're overcrowded in buildings we can barely afford to maintain. That growing class sizes threaten the very type and quality of education, especially for our many high-risk students who deserve personal attention. That we must spend so much time working on FTES because the funding system itself is ludicrous. That thousands of satisfied students not enrolled in a program don't even show up as being satisfied because the method of program review for community colleges is as ludicrous as the funding system.

Ours is a compelling story of opening doors to thousands of citizens, working with them, challenging them, nurturing them in their desire to prepare themselves for more productive, richer lives. It's also a story of commitment and hard work and demonstrated success by college personneloperating on skeleton budgets.

At the VCCA convention and other VCCS gatherings, I'm always impressed by the energy and dedication of faculty, staff, administrators, board members, students, and alumni. Why not channel this energy and dedication in our funding effortorchestrated as it is now and should be by the chancellor and presidents and boards?

We all know how touched we are when an alumna tells how she dropped out of high school to get married, had three kids, soon found herself divorced and raising those kids, started at the community college, where she found the special help she needed, and now works as a CPA for an area accounting firm. We must also tell the other part of the story: how frustrating it is to be funded so poorly for achieving such successes.

When the chancellor or a president or a local board member tells it, our story can sound self serving. But when a reading teacher explains that it takes a year of hard work for a student to move up one grade level in reading, or when an alumnus tells how the developmental program enabled him to enter and complete college work and begin a career in respiratory therapy, people are touched.

Let an experienced part-time teacher explain how hard she works for much less pay than a graduate student at a nearby university doing the same work with half the number of students. Let a second-year student tell about the decrease in personal attention because of increased class size. Let an administrator tell how much time is wasted because of the FTE-driven funding system. Let a support staff member tell about the range of needs shown by students having no real experience of academia. Let a high school dropout tell how pleased she is about the three night courses which enabled her to be promoted to supervisor of the office where she's worked for twelve years.

Legislators and other community leaders like to feel kinship with education. They'll enjoy dialogue with teachers, students, support staff, administrators, board members, and alumni. They want to be advocates for solutions to our many social problems, and they'll be touched and appreciative and supportive when they hear our story.

Our administrators and board members may think such teamwork is risky. Wasn't the community college movement itself risky? But we've proven what's possible when higher education opens its doors and puts its mind to real teaching. The resurgence of interest in undergraduate teaching at universities across the nation is happening in part because we've shown them upsoundly. If we're to continue our success as democracy's college, we must beef up the funding effort. Now. Together.

Dick Harrington, who teaches English at Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville, served as the first President of the Virginia Community Colleges Association.

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